Crisis in the Nile Galaxy: Admiral Jack, the Diamond Armada, and Callie's Unrequited Attraction

Posted originally on the Archive of Our Own at https://archiveofourown.org/works/24361156.

Rating:	Teen And Up Audiences
Archive Warning:	Graphic Depictions Of Violence
Categories:	F/F, F/M, Multi, Other
Fandoms:	Steven Universe (Cartoon), Cleopatra In Space (Cartoon), Samurai Jack (Cartoon)
Relationships:	Lars Barriga & Padparadscha, Lars Barriga & Rhodonite, Lars Barriga & Off Colors, Lars Barriga & Fluorite, Lars Barriga & Rutile Twins, Samurai Jack & Diamonds, Akila Theoris/Brian Bell, Cleopatra/Callie, Cleopatra/Akila Theoris, Octavian & Khepra, Khensu & Cleopatra, Yosira & Cleopatra, Khensu & Cleopatra & Brian Bell & Akila Theoris, Octavian & Cleopatra, Akila Theoris & Cleopatra
Characters:	Samurai Jack, Peridot(s) (Steven Universe), Nephrite(s) (Steven Universe), Hessonite (Steven Universe), Emerald (Steven Universe), Pink Diamond's Pearl (Steven Universe), Lars Barriga, Fluorite (Steven Universe), Rhodonite (Steven Universe), Rutile Twins (Steven Universe), Padparadscha (Steven Universe), Cleopatra (Cleopatra In Space), Octavian (Cleopatra in Space), Xerxs (Cleopatra in Space), Khensu Kasaar (Cleopatra in Space), Akila Theoris (Cleopatra In Space), Brian Bell (Cleopatra in Space), Callie (Cleopatra in Space), Administrant Khepra (Cleopatra in Space), Mihos (Cleopatra in Space), Pharaoh Yosira (Cleopatra in Space), Crystal (Original Character)
Additional Tags:	Magic, Fantasy, Crossover Pairings, Emotional Hurt/Comfort, Unrequited Love, Swords & Sorcery, archives, Developing Relationship, Developing Friendships, Yuri, Tactical Roar, Outer Space, Mind Control, Canon Character of Color, Cats, Portals, Cracked Gems, Nationalism, Cults, Eating, Archives for the win, Male-Female Friendship, Immortality, Villains, Time Travel, Hair Brushing, Lipstick & Lip Gloss, Makeup, Palaces, Royalty, Unresolved Emotional Tension, Cleo is gonna have a tough time living that kiss down, The Author Regrets Nothing, Podfic Welcome, Original Character(s)
Language:	English
Series:	Part 25 of An Unlikely Alliance Against Evildoers
Stats:	Published: 2020-05-24 Completed: 2025-04-08 Words: 10,515 Chapters: 6/6

Crisis in the Nile Galaxy: Admiral Jack, the Diamond Armada, and Callie's Unrequited Attraction

by lefemmerouge

Summary

Inter-dimensional tears continue to cause havoc in the universe. One of these rips causes an armada of Gem warships, prepared to invade an alternative Earth with a technologically advanced civilization, to be transported thousands of years in the future to the strange and little-known Nile Galaxy. This accidental warp through space and time, will lead to conflicts between the immortal villain, Octavian, the forces of P.Y.R.A.M.I.D., and the Gem armada, while secrets are revealed and relationships are tested. As characters enter the stage, they will be forced to make decisions which will determine the future of the Nile Galaxy and the entire universe, as the fabric of space-time hangs in the balance…

Notes

This fic takes place after episode 19 ("Vacation") of the Cleopatra in Space series. In the last part of this story, Pappy is used as a nickname for Padparascha, and OCAC is the acronym for the Off Colors Astral Cruiser. I added Cleo/Callie, and Akila/Cleo, along with Cleo & Callie, Akila & Cleo because I am still deciding how I am going to explore those relationships in later stories. There are only graphic depictions of violence, you could say, during some of the battle scenes.

Comments are welcome and appreciated.

Update: On April 8, 2025, I decided to divide this into various chapters in preparation for adding it to Squidge World. It was later cross-posted on Squidge World. When it was cross-posted on there, the text was revised to remove any previous flaws, including changes to dialogue, phrasing, and the like.

See the end of the work for more notes

Chapter 1: Admiral Jack's Offensive

The massive fleet of *Trilliant Splitters*, *Destiny Destroyers*, and *Sun Incinerators*, accompanied by the *Pear Shimmer*, dropped out of warp. Admiral Jack, in his personal starfighter, the *Asscher Slasher*, served as the Supreme Commander of this Great Diamond Armada (GDA). Under his command, they had scored a major victory against the Horde, only suffering minor casualties. Yellow and White Diamond were so impressed by this victory that they assembled the Gem army, otherwise known as the Great Diamond Military (GDM) and sent them away from Homeworld on a mission to "defeat the enemy and restore honor to Gemkind," at least in White's words.

This was reportedly part of a quest to expand the empires of the Diamonds. This reasoning served as a cover story for the truth. White and Yellow only wanted to send off this army to be rid of them. Once Blue realized this, she dropped her original opposition to the deployment of the GDM. The Diamonds soon realized that Steven had been right: *they needed to change*. However, this would be on a path he would have disavowed. The Diamonds wanted to consolidate their control on Homeworld, changing from cult-like imperial rule into a full-on oligarchy which would rule over the citizenry with an iron fist.

Although they agreed to not tell Steven about this development, none remembered the message they had sent him earlier in the year to get his attention. They all expected that the "Earth," the GDM would be warping to, could roundly, and easily, defeat their forces. After all, it had an advanced civilization which had mastered space travel technology. That is why White and Yellow originally saw it as a "threat." When Yellow Pearl and Blue Pearl realized that the whole invasion could be a diversion, allowing the Diamonds to increase their power, they schemed to maintain their own power. As for those Gems who had been swept up by the jingoistic sentiments on Homeworld, the latter of which promoted by the Diamonds themselves, not everything would go according to plan, since the GDA *did not* arrive at the correct coordinates.

The small docking bay of the *Pear Shimmer* unlocked, with the *Ascher Slasher* entering gracefully, and the huge blast doors closing behind it. Before the ship landed, Jack flipped a switch, activating the autopilot, and spun out of the cockpit. His wooden shoes made a loud clacking sound as they touched the cold metal floor. Apart from a grey monotone uniform, he still wore a sash about his waist, like his normal white kimono robes that he had worn for years. The sash attached to a scabbard encasing his magical samurai sword, a weapon forged to defeat Aku, the worst incarnation of evil, and anyone who stood alongside him.

While he would be fighting the evils of the world with his sword, given to him by the gods of his world, the combined mind control of Blue, White, and Yellow overpowered this duty. A petrified Peridot came running up to him. His left eyebrow moved up, unsure of her reasons for being concerned. "Ma'am, why are you so scared? What's there to worry about? We arrived at that planet named 'Earth,' right? We can finish off their armies and *bring glory* to the Diamonds."

The Peridot continued to shutter. She did not want to upset him. At the same time, she knew that lying to him would be worse, resulting in severe, unrelenting punishment. She breathed deeply and gazed into his black eyes, nervously fidgeting with her hands, and frightened by his possible reaction. "That's the thing, sir. We aren't near Earth. None of these planets show up on any of our star charts. I don't know what system we arrived in…we aren't supposed to be here, for sure."

Jack did not take kindly to this revelation. He complained and stepped closer to the Peridot. With an irritated expression on his face, his demand could not be more evident, even without speaking a word: he wanted to know about any other problems they had encountered because of this "error." She stuttered, hemmed, and hawed until a few words spat out of her mouth. "Uh…sir…I think we…uh…*traveled in time*…into the future. We tried to get in touch with Homeworld using our instruments and we have received *no response* yet."

Jack became even more irritated. With no forces to back them up, they were no better than sitting ducks. An unforeseen enemy could be waiting behind any of the planets, ready to strike at a moment's notice. At least, that is how he saw it. He groaned and issued an order. "Soldier, the only way we can win is to know what we are up against in this strange universe. Inform your fellow Peridots and anyone with technical knowledge to scan *as much of the area* as possible. I'll issue subsequent commands to the rest of the armada."

The Peridot bowed and added "it will be done, my commander" before walking away. Jack sauntered back to his starfighter, thinking of his next move. He deactivated the autopilot. He subsequently flew the *Asscher Slasher* out of the hangar and into an area adjacent to the ship. His radio communicator soon crackled with an eagerly awaited message from the Nephrites. "Admiral, we are getting into position. We will follow you to Sector 78. Our sensors picked up a *huge energy reading* at those coordinates. As such, examining it with you it is a top priority, sir."

Jack grinned like a Cheshire cat. He was delighted and overjoyed with the chance to learn about these *malefactors*, hoping to wipe them out entirely. Of course, Jack’s position was, without a doubt, hypocritical because the GDA, an undoubtedly evil force, had one mission: dominating over others in this galaxy and any other, devastating them until *nothing would be left.* In his mind-controlled state, Jack put aside such inconsistencies, and praised the squadron, issuing one last command before the mission began. "Nephrite Squadron, thank you for informing me with the latest update. We need to scout ahead to ensure we are prepared in case the enemy tries any surprise attacks."

Jack and the Nephrites snaked their ships through an asteroid field, tactfully avoiding every piece of rock flying in their direction. Unexpectedly, a bright bluish light shone on their spacecrafts. A warning siren range out, and they could hear a message blared in their direction, spoken in an incomprehensible language. A message kept repeating over and over, which, roughly translated would mean "surrender, resistance is futile."

A set of greyish spaceships, with red hieroglyphs etched on the side, approached their unit, and their laser cannons began charging, ready to blast them to kingdom come. Jack groused, directing his fellow ships to retreat from the pursuing ships, with their weapons at the ready as a *defensive measure*. While enemy crafts did not pursue them as they retreated, red blasts

from their cannons still struck the asteroids around them, causing flying debris. In the process, the a few *Marquise Chippers* broke apart, and those Nephrites inside were poofed, even as most of the squadron survived the onslaught. At a safe distance away from the enemy forces, and breathing a deep sigh of relief, Jack switched on the GDA radio and made a pronouncement, heard by all those Gems tuned into the frequency, with his words echoing across each ship.

"Fellow soldiers, we have encountered the enemy. Our small unit could not face them. We must press on. With the whole might of this fleet, we cannot fail. The ground units on the *Pear Shimmer* will stay behind until the coast is clear, with Emerald's Destiny Destroyer Squadron as an escort, along with one or two *Trilliant Splitters*. The *Destiny Destroyers* and *Sun Incinerators* will be accompanied by the bulk of the *Marquise Chippers*, and most of the *Trilliant Splitters*. I will lead this operation and quash this upstart group of ne'er do wells. We do this...for the Diamonds!"

Jack could hear the Gems cheering on the other side. The space fighters made their way through the space debris and had their cannons at the ready. Jack pushed a button on his control panel, indicating that the offensive could begin. The Nephrites acknowledged this order, speeding their ships forward in a swarm. Red and green lasers spiraled across space. The enemy ships tried to hold their ground, but they were no match. In only a few minutes, their ships had been smashed to bits, although at a heavy cost. The skirmish had destroyed a quarter of the *Marquise Chippers*, with the wrecked ships, and the gems of the Nephrite pilots, whether shattered or whole, littered the battlefield. The fleet closed in on what appeared to be a space station. They were not aware that it served as the backup Xerxs factory after the original one had been demolished.

The Xerxs were robots which served as foot soldiers of Octavian, a tyrant who ruled *half the Nile Galaxy*. An organization known as P.Y.R.A.M.I.D. ruled the other half of the galaxy. Even though Jack nor the Gems were not aware of this, the truth would soon be revealed to them. The fleet held its position and Jack requested a select strike team from the *Pear Shimmer* be sent toward their position and onto the space station. The Gems complied, while Jack remained in the vicinity, ready to support to those fighting inside the factory. A group led by a Citrine, named Crystal, given the name due to the fact that citrine crystals are light crystals which have a yellow hue, would lead this important mission. As she and her group touched down inside, she could hear the factory's machinery churning nearby while the light of the space station reflected off all the parts of her yellowish luminescent body.

Saying nothing, and using her hands to give directives, Crystal marched her team ahead. A robot guard stood in their way, saying something in gibberish. If they could have heard its message, they would have heard a robotic voice warning them that their presence was unauthorized. Crystal cared little about this obstacle, so she punched the robot through its chest, damaging its memory board, causing it to shut down. She pressed on, with her black cape flapping in the wind. Every obstacle in their way had been eliminated. In no time at all, they entered the server room, which coincidentally contained the station's power source. Some of the Peridots began downloading information to their electronic devices, so it could be analyzed by the fleet. However, this mission would not be a walk in the park.

As the footsteps of the Xerxs came ever closer, the time bombs set by her team began to beep and were ready to detonate. Crystal whisked her team out the room just in time. A nearby *Trilliant Splitter* triangulated on their location, beaming them inside. Not all of those in her group could be saved, as the Xerxs injured some of them, causing them to poof or become more fragmented gems in space. When explosions began to wreck the facility, Jack ordered the fleet to move away so their ships would not be damaged.

In a huge flash of orange and yellow light, the space station exploded. The reverberations which followed caused their ships to shake. Luckily, their vessels could sustain the pressure from the shockwaves. Jack insisted on a report. A Peridot began talking to him about the "success" of their mission: "Sir, even though the enemy shattered and poofed more of our fellow Gems, we were able to extract data from the hostile space station. Even though analysis is ongoing, preliminary results indicate that the enemy consists of a robot army *led by a person known as Octavian*. They are based on a planet, near the station, known as Octavianus. Is that all, sir?"

Jack replied with a simple "yes" and clicked off his comlink. Abruptly, the communications within the fleet were jammed with one message from an unknown source: a person who called himself "Octavian." The Gems gathered that he was the one who controlled the space station, which they had recently wrecked into thousands of pieces, and the army of Xerxs. He began speaking with a thunderous voice, meant to strike fear into the hearts of his enemies.

"I am Octavian, ruler of the Nile Galaxy, commander of the mighty army of Xerxs. Your obliteration of my new Xerxs Works is most unfortunate. It will be dealt with in the severest manner possible. No crime like this will go unpunished! Long live the Xerxs!"

Jack and the Gems could not understand why his words were in a comprehensible language while the robots, which battered their ships, had spoken with a foreign tongue. Jack began working with Emerald, Pink Pearl, Crystal, and others, on a scheme to neutralize this threat. They decided on a blitzkrieg assault involving a rushed assault to Octavianus quickly, hoping to avoid a drawn-out clash. The plan began its first phase, with a rushed strike force soon breaking through the planet's atmosphere and encountering heavy flak. Jack and his *Marquise Chippers* worked to secure landing areas which were free from enemy fire.

Huge cloaked transport ships deployed from the *Pear Shimmer* and touched down in areas across the planet. These vessels unloaded a large invasion force composed of mobile Diamond drills, tank-like *Esperanzas*, and infantry, consisting of Jaspers, Peridots, Carnelians, Amethysts and Citrines. Pink Pearl served as the ground commander. She would be joined by Crystal, and un-bubbled Rose Quartzes who directed battalions of Gem fighters. The Lapis Lazulis and Aquamarines were ready to assist the ground forces as needed. The Gem forces began advancing, firing their gem-enhanced rifles, each one customized for their type of Gem, at the advancing Xerxs. These robots were lying in wait, ready to fight the interlopers, until the end.

Jack instructed Hessonite, commandant of the *Trilliant Splitters* to provide cover to those on the ground. Emerald's *Destiny Destroyers* and the *Sun Incinerators* directed by Agates, the latter staffed by Amethysts and Carnelians, would ensure that no space forces interfered with their mission. Realizing the danger that he faced from the resolute invading Gems, and

dreading he would lose the battle, ruining his strategies to finish off P.Y.R.A.M.I.D., Octavian instructed his Xerxs to retreat. Walking back and forth inside the reinforced palace he had constructed with his bare hands, he patched through a call to someone *he never expected* to solicit for help, even though it seemed like a long shot.

Chapter 2: Cleo, Callie, and the Diary Page

Chapter Summary

Cleo wakes up and is greeted by her good friend, Akila, even getting a message from Octavian, asking for Cleo's help. Elsewhere, Callie writes in her diary entry, admitting her feelings for Cleo, which happens to travel out her window...

Chapter Notes

I created this chapter in preparation for splitting off this fic to Squidge World.

Two dark brown-skinned arms stretched up to the ceiling and a loud yawn filled the room. The young girl's matted hair draped across her head, the way it appeared every morning, shining in the sunlight. As she continued to stretch, Mihos, her animal companion, a cross-between a squirrel and ferret, which she had rescued from Kenyu a few months before, squeaked. He wrapped himself around her neck lovingly. She happily petted him on his head, and stroked his fur, a mix of medium green and pale yellow, across his back. He purred. He enjoyed her attention. She took off her blue-colored sleeping clothes, and put on her academy garb, then stepped out of the bathroom proudly. She tiptoed toward a slumbering Akila and snickered, bellowing the word "boo!" As Akila stirred, her pinkish eyes, with white crosses in the center, opened slightly.

She drowsily stared at her roommate, and whispered "hey, Cleo" calmly. Cleo grinned back, and sweetly replied, "Good morning, sleepyhead." Mihos happily chirped, also glad to see that Akila had woken up. Right before they were ready to go down to the food court, Cleo's comlink began to flicker with an incoming message. Uncertain of who would be sending her a message this early in the morning, she quickly brushed her hair and answered her communicator crankily. As the video message appeared, she saw a hologram of Octavian. He began speaking. This frightened and exasperated her. "Hey, Cleopatra, I know you *probably hate me* after all the stuff I did…but...I need your help."

Cleo let out a huge laugh as she gazed into Octavian's deep red eyes. She could not believe what she was hearing. *Why would Octavian want her aid, of all people?* she thought to herself. She gawked and sneered at him, not taking his request seriously, believing it to be a practical joke. "Even if you really *do* need my help, why in the world should I trust you? You have been trying to kill me since I arrived in the Nile Galaxy, kidnapped my friends, and stressed me out in more ways than I can count. There's *no way* in the world I'm ever going to

lend a hand to the likes of you. Don't call me ever again, Dorktavian. This convo's over, Emperor Pickleface.”

As she switched off the com, Octavian could be heard voicing the words "wait, here me out, I'd like to talk to you about something…" before his voice was cut off. Akila tried to hold her back, reminding her to approach this rationally. This approach did not work. She quickly broke free from Akila's grasp, not before she flirtatiously gave her a peck on the cheek. She opened the door and stormed off, becoming more and more hungry every passing minute, her stomach loudly grumbling. Subsequently, Akila slipped out of the room and down to the food court, so she could buy a morning meal from her favorite café, *Nardi Jawiyin*, which everyone called narjaw for short.

Cleo banged on Khensu's door and began hollering "open up!" A sleepy-eyed Khensu punched in a code on the keypad, resulting in the sliding door unlocking before him. Rubbing his olive-green eyes, with yellow irises, he gazed up at an energetic, and angry, Cleo. He moaned and questioned her about what was going on.

Her actions, while inside his quarters, astonished him, nothing like he had even seen before. She spoke eagerly, and nervously, twirling her hair around her finger. "Khensu, I came here because Octavian *gave me a call* this morning. He claimed he needed my help or something…I told him to buzz off since he tried to kill me all those times…I don't know what his issue is…and who calls this early in the morning anyway?"

Breathing deeply, Khensu calmly inquired if she had eaten any breakfast. She bobbed her head side-to-side, confirming to him what he thought. He recommended they all buy some "good grub" from the food court and meet back in his quarters so they could discuss this in private. She concurred. Leaving the room, Khensu and Cleo walked together toward the lower level of this P.Y.R.A.M.I.D. dormitory, which also served as an academic building with offices for professors, some classrooms, and the school's library. Akila chowed down on a simple toasted sandwich, with lettuce, tomato, melted cheese, and plant butter. She loved the cuisine served in the school’s food court. Before she could finish eating, a strong hand grabbed her and begin pulling her out of her chair. She peered up and saw Cleo, holding a brown paper bag in her other hand.

She whined and exclaimed, "come on, Akila, let’s go." Aggravated she could not finish her sandwich in peace, she wrapped it up, and put it in her other hand. She shrugged and griped, requesting that Cleo stop holding her hand. She did so, not before she heard the words "Kiki, this is important, I need you" come out of Cleo’s mouth. Not wanting to make a scene, her cheeks changed to a lighter blue as she spoke the following words into Cleo’s right ear: "don't you *dare* use that name again. Only my moms call me that."

Cleo giggled a little bit, promising to not call her by that name in the future. She then spoke softly, reminding Akila her middle name was Cleopatra, causing Akila to blush yet again, as they walked up the stairs toward Khensu's quarters. Brian approached them in the hallway, questioning them about their destination. Akila scoffed. "This is between me, Cleo, and Khensu. *You* aren't part of it." When a sad expression washed over Brian's face, Cleo grinned, and said that he would be welcome, angering Akila. They all walked into the room, ready to

discuss the message she and Akila had heard that very morning, while eating a hearty (and healthy) breakfast.

Many rooms away, Callie wrote in a diary, her messy and drooping pinkish bangs covered her face, creating a hair curtain that only one eye could see out of. She would never share this journal with *anyone* because it revealed her personal thoughts about everything. If anyone ever saw it, her snobby, self-centered, and pigheaded attitude *would be shown as a façade* she erected to hide her true emotions from the world, ruining her in more ways than one. She furiously wrote on the glossy pink pages with one of her fancy pens.

> *"I can remember back to the day I first saw Cleopatra. She walked so gracefully through the school, with such confidence in each of her steps and demeanor. I liked her sassy attitude too. When she unseated me from my role at this school, she became my rival. Even so, she saved me from that demented rocker, Zedge, who thought I was her. And we sang that duet together. That was so nice. Later, she hugged me after that DittoBot tried to kill her at the arcade, which surprised me. I felt disgusted at the time… even so, in some small way, I kinda liked it. I wish she wouldn't see me as the mean girl and her competitor. If she could understand the pressure that I am under here, with my parents never accepting failure, I would be grateful…if I even hint that I like her, it would be game over for me. Lakshmi and my other friends, part of my loyal posse, would abandon me at the drop of a hat. Could I cast them aside? I'm not sure. Sometimes I dream that Cleo would kiss me, with her purplish black hair, filled with gold streaks, brushing against my face…am I going bonkers, or are these kinds of thoughts normal? I don't know...For the time being, I have to hold in these feelings in my heart… I have no choice but to…"*

She wept, ripped the page out of her book, balled it up, and threw it out the window. She did not even want to examine what she had written. Thinking about it made her even more despondent and depressed. Getting herself ready for the day increased her self-confidence. She began brushing her long pale magenta hair, with its sheen sparkling in the sunlight, and putting on her makeup, like her trademark pink lipstick. The page she had carefully crumpled up did not drop on the ground. If it had, the robotic sweeping droids would have snatched and burned it in their incinerators. Instead, the wind clutched the piece of paper, and blew it inside Akila and Cleo's room, where it handed on Cleo's messy bed.

Chapter 3: Octavian's Message

Chapter Summary

Cleo, Akila, and Brian work to figure out Octavian's message. They meet Yosira. Not long later, Khepra secretly communicates with Octavian, who explains why he contacted Cleo: to prevent an invasion of his home planet.

Chapter Notes

I split this off into its own chapter before cross-posting it on Squidge World.

Meanwhile in Khensu's quarters, Cleo, Akila, and Brian were dumbfounded. After Cleo replayed the message yet again, they all requested guidance from Khensu. He threw up his paws, not sure what any of them wanted from him. He pivoted the conversation away from himself and onto Cleo. "You're the team leader. *You should* make the decision about this, not me."

Not liking when people put her on the spot, Cleo fumbled. Even so, thinking quickly on her feet, she soon regained her composure. She decided that their only way forward would be consultation with the P.Y.R.A.M.I.D. Council. Even though their mission to raze the Xerxs Works had been a rousing success, it had been conducted without the council's approval, a method encouraged by Pharaoh Yosira *herself*, the worst offender of the lot. This time it would be different. More was on the line than laying a space station to waste.

Khensu, Cleo, Akila, and Brian left the P.Y.R.A.M.I.D. school complex and walked into Mayet City. The huge skyscrapers towered over the bustling city, with flying vehicles zooming from place to place as multiple lifeforms roamed the city streets. A force field of some kind protected it, and the P.Y.R.A.M.I.D. complex, from meteorites and possible enemy attacks. While they would have taken public transit inside the city, walking seemed more wholesome, allowing them to take in all the city sights. After reaching the city's tallest building, which housed the P.Y.R.A.M.I.D. Council, Cleo spotted Yosira, and smiled. "Hi!" About to enter the building, she asked Akila, Brian, and Khensu to go inside to the council chambers while she chatted with Yosira. "So, what brings you here?"

Yosira chuckled and jested Cleo. She saw Cleo as her sister and a fellow royal. Technically, Cleo no longer held a royal title. She only had a title when she lived in Ancient Egypt, over 30,000 years in the past. The P.Y.R.A.M.I.D. Council and those at the Savior Institute on Chios had called her the "Savior of the Galaxy" for years. She explained how the council received daily reports from her about ongoing efforts to take back the Nile Galaxy from

Octavian. She followed this by complimenting Cleo on her appearance. "I like what you've done with your hair, Cleo. It is so…pretty with those gold highlights! The warm black color is soothing…unlike my hair. *You always* have the best style of anyone I know!"

Uncomfortable with her compliments, Cleo's cheeks became as red as raspberries. As her cheeks returned to their normal color, she explained that her hair was very dark greyish violet with gold streaks. Even with this "correction," she thanked Yosira for her praise about her style. Yosira nodded. Cleo pointed to the precise variance in each of their hair colors. She claimed that while hers was lighter, instead being black or dark purple. She continued to nod and remarked that the color of someone's hair is the eye of the beholder, with Cleo rejoining with a simple "uh huh" before walking inside. About to wave goodbye to Yosira, she changed her mind, and ran toward her instead. She requested that Yosira accompany her inside as an observer because of the importance of her message to the P.Y.R.A.M.I.D. Council. Although she was puzzled by this request, she decided to abide by it anyway.

Khensu, Akila, and Brian were awaiting Cleo in the atrium, and they walked in together. Cleo explained that Yosira would be a silent spectator. After they strutted into the council chambers, an authoritative Khepra noticed them, demanding she respond to her question, "what is your business before the council at this early hour?" Cleo explained the urgency of the matter. Khepra's brown irises focused on Cleo and her team while those who sat beside her, Msumaki, Kek, Misti, Professor Sitre, and three others, did the same. The council members were skeptical until Cleo told them what had transpired that morning.

They requested the video from Octavian be played for their full examination. She obliged, guffawing at what she had said to Octavian. Speaking on behalf of the council, Khepra addressed Cleo and her team. "While I would take issue with *your sassy attitude*, Cleopatra, you did the right thing by rejecting his pleas and coming to us before taking any action. *We will investigate this* and use our sources behind enemy lines assess the veracity of his claims. Due to the nature of this message, we will conduct our examination post-haste. Come back to us *in seven days* for a full report."

Cleo bowed toward them respectfully. She responded by thanking the council. The rest of her team and Yosira stayed silent. They stepped out of the council chambers and thereafter onto the Mayet City streets once more. Furious it would take the council a week to find this out, she *wanted* to go on a solo mission to face Octavian herself. Only the pleas of Brian and Akila dissuaded her. After dismissing the council and waiting until everyone had left, Khepra snuck back to her private room. She made sure the door had been locked and put on a white noise machine near the door.

She followed this activity by turning a few knobs on her desk's Communication Hissing Analytic Transmitter, known as C.H.A.T., with a blue glow illuminating the room. The face of Octavian appeared on the other side, with a grin on his face. She bowed her head in deference, and he inquired on her status at the academy. "Administrant Khepra, is there any news to report? Remember, it's *dangerous* to call me. You could put our plot in jeopardy, with our strategy falling to pieces like an exploding snowball. We have worked so many years to get to this point. Don't ruin this with any sloppy decisions!"

She expressed reverence for Octavian. If Cleo, her team, Khensu, or anyone on the council had known she had been the real spy, with Zaid as the patsy, it would have overturned their whole world, causing chaos across the academy. They did not know that, and she hoped it stayed that way. She proceeded to explain what had just occurred in the council chambers.

"My esteemed Octavian, Cleopatra came before the council with *her rapscallion friends*, inquiring about a message you sent her, requesting us to investigate it. I reassured her we would give her a report within a week. I do not think she knows the true nature of our strategy. Still, sir, why would you put this at risk and call our mortal enemy, Cleopatra, *asking for help*?"

Octavian grumbled. He described the recent assault by unknown forces on his space station which had begun constructing Xerxs after the first one had been leveled by Cleo and her team, with the help of Yosira, who attacked him with a powerful sickle. He further recounted the subsequent invasion of Octavianus by those same forces. Hearing his explanations, Khepra fully understood the urgency of Octavian's request to Cleo. She proceeded to scratch her face, and added, "Do what you think is best, *my revered Emperor*. I trust that you will use your best judgment to handle this issue appropriately. We must bring this plot to fruition if it's the last thing we do."

He nodded in reply. Generally, he disliked cats. However, he had no other options. There was no choice but to work with Khepra. They had conspired together to *create an ongoing faux war*, meaning that his armies and those of P.Y.R.A.M.I.D. would each rule half the galaxy. This form of peaceful coexistence served them both. The actions by Cleo and her team, from the space station breaking apart into nothingness to the demolishing of his flagship, and the freeing of Zaid's parents, had *all been setbacks*. The fact the other UTA Tablet remained elusive grated Octavian every day, as it did for Khepra. Since he and Khepra were allies, even if reluctant ones, he would know the tablet's location at the same time as Cleo, her team, Khensu, and the rest of the P.Y.R.A.M.I.D. Council. He explained his perilous situation.

"Khepra, I called Cleopatra because *I thought* she could help me fight off this enemy force which began assaulting the planet of Octavianus. They have weapons unlike anything I've ever seen. If they end up overrunning my defensive force, and taking over the palace, I'll be coming to Mayet. If that does happen, I will inform you, and would ask that you give me permission now so I can enter the shield protecting Mayet City in the event the worst comes to pass."

Chapter 4: Admiral Jack, Octavian, and the Continuing Fight

Chapter Summary

> After Octavian ends his conversation with Khepra, he has to fight off the Gem army which is led by Admiral Jack, on the surface of Octavianus. This is all a ruse to cover his escape, with Jack leading the armada forward, while the mind control the Diamonds put on him has begun to crack...

Chapter Notes

> I split this off into its own chapter before cross-posting this on Squidge World.

Understanding what he meant now, and his reasoning for contacting their mutual foe, Khepra bobbed her head up and down, while transferring the appropriate credentials to enter the Mayet City shield. Octavian voiced the word "goodbye" and clicked off the comlink. He had no more time to talk. Beating back the invaders with all he had remained a bigger priority at the present.

In the time he had talked, the Gem army had significantly advanced, and only stood only one klick away. He stepped onto the steps of his palace, standing in front of his Xerxs, with his sickle, otherwise known as the sword of Kebet, extended. He yelled at the top of his lungs one word: "charge!" His robot soldiers blasted the Gems, who fell left and right, as did his soldiers. However, the Gems were, generally, not broken into little pieces, and only lost their physical forms, while the robots were *blown apart* into smithereens. His army stood no match against the Lapis Lazulis, the Amethysts, and Jaspers, all heavy hitters for the Gem forces. Fighting between the two forces created a huge dust cloud.

Falling to the ground and unable to see even one foot ahead of him, a starfighter sped across the battleground, and a shape jumped out. It yelled "for the honor…*of the Diamonds*!" Octavian stood on his guard. This did little to prevent the metal blade from cutting into his shoulder, causing him to howl in pain. He loudly screamed, "show yourself, coward!" He heard the figure, who held his katana defensively, mocking and taunting him.

He ran full speed ahead, with his legs sliced by the sword's blade, again leading him to yowl in agony. The figure snorted, standing on the edge of a cliff, again teasing Octavian, and daring him to strike back with all his might. "I am Admiral Jack, Commander of the Great Diamond Armada. *You will rue the day you crossed me*. My fleet wishes to conquer the entire galaxy for the magnificent and eminent Diamond Authority! Anyone who doesn't comply… we will overrun until *they submit* to our fleet."

Octavian clapped his hands. He saw Jack as a joker who could never best him. In case a fight went sour, he always had a few tricks up his sleeve. He walked closer, approaching Jack face-to-face. Their eyes met while their weapons sparked upon contact with one another. "Bravo, *Admiral.* Congrats on getting my attention. That's fine and all…but I don't have time for this anymore. I have *a galaxy to conquer*, the same wish of you and your fleet. So, bye!"

He ran past Jack, dropping into the deep crevice, but not before Jack's sword sliced him again on the legs. Octavian knew exactly what he was doing. He fell into a beige-colored compartment, the same color as the ground, so well hidden you could not see it unless you were right on top of it. As a result, Jack assumed that Octavian had been maimed or killed. Nothing could be further from the truth. Instead, Octavian had entered his underground bunker.

He gave one last decree to the remaining Xerxs: *fall back and defend the palace at all costs*. He limped over to a small aerodynamic pyramid-shaped ship. Barely making it into the cockpit, he inputted coordinates for the planet of Mayet into the ship's nav-computer. He did not know where else to go. As he groaned, with aches across his body, he initiated the takeoff process. After the 10-second countdown ended, the launch doors opened. His vessel shot through the sky like a rocket, quickly speeding through planet's atmosphere with its powerful engines. Octavian thought he could escape this nightmare and start anew on Mayet.

Still on the frontlines, Jack received a joint call from Hessonite and Emerald, reporting that an unidentified object had been recorded leaving the planet's surface. Without a second thought, he knew exactly who was inside: Octavian. He screamed into his receiver: "catch that ship. Don't let it escape." The cannons of the *Trilliant Splitters*, the *Destiny Destroyers*, and other ships focused on Octavian's ship, putting it in the line of fire. This would be no use. The ship, on autopilot due to Octavian's condition had double ray-shielding, allowing him to healed himself from the injuries Jack inflicted upon him. The lasers did not damage it at all.

In the flick of an eye, the vessel warped through space. It would have delighted them to know that their blasts had weakened the ship's shields, *with only 30%* of its shield capacity remaining. With most of its power dedicated toward space travel and healing Octavian, no energy could be used to repair the damaged shields. Octavian knew this would be a risk. Even so, he decided to leave the planet of Octavianus, confident his ship could withstand the wide barrage of armaments aimed at his ship.

After hearing about Octavian's escape from Hessonite and Emerald, Jack shook his fist in the air, scolding them and requesting they stay in space. Around the same time, the dust cleared. Even as many Gem warriors remained standing, gemstones were strewn across the landscape, along with a few groups of gem shards, once soldiers of the GDA. Those that remained marched toward the palace, easily brushing aside the remaining Xerxs, which only numbered two dozen. They entered the palace grounds, with Jack at the lead, and Pink Pearl standing at his side. Each of them took a group of soldiers, *searching for any clues* for where their foe had run off to, while others stood guard in case any Xerxs revisited the palace to "enact revenge."

Pink Pearl and her patrol stumbled upon a room lit by a greenish glow. Entering carefully, they discovered a nest of computers, each with a connection to the mainframe. It constituted a

digital archives, backing up information which P.Y.R.A.M.I.D. claimed he "destroyed" as part of the blight. This claim was nothing more than propaganda spread by Octavian, used in the school curriculum thanks to his informant, Khepra. The school had hidden the reality from their students: he had taken this information for himself, as a distraction from his real scheme: domination over the entire Nile Galaxy, with everyone accepting his lies and mistruths, part of his broad and "glorious" empire, as true.

Reams of papers, books, and other physical documents littered the shelves, meticulously organized by category and subject. Since Octavian had to leave in a hurry, *he did not bother* to shut down the servers of the archives or lock the room they were housed in from possible intruders. In retrospect, he would recognize this as a huge mistake, not aware of *how tenacious* the Gem soldiers and their commander would be in combat, *using the archival records* to find his weakness, defeating him, and his armies, in a glorious victory.

Jack did not find anything in what Pink Pearl and her squadron of soldiers had unearthed. He came across something else: an entrance to an underground tunnel. He guessed that it was where Octavian's ship had been housed before it zoomed off the planet surface. As he and his fellow soldiers walked down the stairs, they triggered a setting which slammed the door behind them, bolting it shut. Jack cautioned them, warning that traps likely lay around them. His fellow Gems shivered in panic, some began poofing out of fright, while a loyal few remained resolute. Only guided by the light of his sword and their gem weapons, they reached tunnel's end at long last.

There a computer screen had been plastered to the wall, noting the trajectory of Octavian's ship and its destination. Unluckily, one of the Gems, a Peridot, thought they could hack into the system and was electrocuted instead. A siren began blaring a high-pitched sound and the words "INTRUDER ALERT!" Suddenly, turrets popped out of the walls and began firing in their direction. While Jack blocked most of the blasts, his compatriots were not as lucky. The lasers shot into their bodies and poofed every single one of them. *Only Jack remained*. He furiously slashed apart the cannons and ran in the opposite direction.

He picked up as many of gemstones as he could, before slicing apart the door and collapsing on the cold marble ground floor. He began crying and questioned himself: *why am I doing this? Why I am here? I'm supposed to be…* The mind control the Diamonds had hoisted on him *had begun to crack*. This did not last long as his independent consciousness began to be suppressed again, filling his mind with one mission: to serve the Diamonds through thick and thin.

Chapter 5: Mayet, Cleo, Callie, and Love

Chapter Summary

Cleo comes across a diary entry from Callie which expresses her feelings, and tells Akila about it. She asks her advice. Later on, Cleo goes to confront Callie about this, she has an anxiety attack, and Cleo is helped by Callie. They talk more and both part ways, after talking.

Chapter Notes

I split this off into its own chapter before cross-posting it on Squidge World.

On the other side of the galaxy, in Mayet, Cleo paced across her room. Akila told her to rest. About to lay down in her messy bed and take a nap, she saw a wrinkly piece of paper. Intrigued, she began reading it. At first, it confused her. Who would point out her "sassy attitude"? As she examined it further, she started to put the pieces together: the duet, a hug at the arcade, and mention of friends like Lakshmi.

She shot up out of her bed in utter shock, somehow not banging her head on the top bunk in the process. She motioned Akila to come closer and murmured something in her ear. Flabbergasted, Akila could not help herself, blurting out the following words, embarrassing Cleo: "Wait, Callie had a crush on you? Of all people, *why her*?"

Cleo shook her head and cried. The words written on the page confused her too. She thought to herself, *if Callie thinks like this, why doesn't she say it to me directly?* Although Akila's outcry had made her feel uncomfortable, she cared little at this point. She only focused on the substance of the wrinkly page, internally debating how she would approach this sticky issue, coiling her hair around one of her fingers. When meeting with Khensu earlier in the day, she had done the exact same nervous tic. She wanted suggestions from Akila about how she should approach this. "I get why she likes me and all, since she recorded me all those times in the past, because she wanted to be like me…*but why* does she dream of me smooching her?...worst of all, she calls my hair purplish black with gold streaks. That is *all wrong*! Akila…do you have any advice?...please, you gotta tell me."

Akila guffawed so loud it made the room shake like a mini earthquake. She never expected Cleo would come to *her* for social tips, as Cleo was generally extremely outgoing and extroverted. As a good friend who had occasional romantic affection for Cleo, ebbing and flowing from time to time, she saw herself as well-positioned to dispense some words of

wisdom. Scratching her head, she replied to Cleo's question, not in the way Cleo had anticipated.

"Cleo, it is strange she has a crush on you, but *who at this school doesn't*? You're so…radiant with all that unbounded energy…You did touch lips with a girl before, that day when you gave me a smacker…I'll never forget it…so, what are your thoughts about Callie?…I mean do you like her or anything?…or is this all one-sided *from her*? And uh, she and you are wrong about your hair color. It is *dark navy with gold*…when I showed a picture of your hair to my art teacher and she told me it was dark navy. I believe what she told me."

Cleo realized she had to respond to this chatter one issue at a time. After explaining that she had would "*never*, in a million years," have a crush on Callie, she added that she only loved *one person*: Zaid. She strongly professed that her hair was multicolored, consisting of very dark greyish violet with gold streaks, irately affirming that her roommate had it all *wrong* on that count. Even so, she thanked Akila for her guidance and hugged her. She gave her a peck on the cheek, thanking her for the astute words. This expression of thanks seemed to indicate that she *might* also like Akila too, even though she may have not thought of it in a romantic way, rather as just something friends do. After Cleo departed, walking down the hallway, Brian, slipped in. As her cheeks turned a lighter shade of blue, humiliated by his presence, he made an *off-the-cuff remark* about how he thought Cleo's hair had only two colors: black and gold. She groused at his "error," as she stepped forward, and closer, to him.

On the way to Callie's room, she waved to Lakshmi, Cheval, Dennis, and a few others. As she marched down the hallway, she thwacked on Callie's door, shouting "open the door, Callie…nte! We need to talk...*NOW*!" Not sure of what Cleo wanted, she opened the door a crack, annoyed by the intrusion. She snarled and in her typical snobbish attitude, *derided the question*. She shot back, demanding an answer. "What is it, *Cleopootra*? I'm trying to study here if you don't mind!" Seeing the gap, Cleo forced her way in. She pulled out the crinkled paper, smoothing so that it was flat and presented it to Callie, who *attempted* to renounce it. After the door closed behind her, Cleo chuckled. Standing her ground, she began to read the paper aloud, knowing it would provoke a reaction.

When Cleo started talking about the arcade, Callie snatched it out of her hand. Her face lit up bright red, *ashamed* to see her crush reading something from her private diary. Stumbling, Callie struggled to come up with the right words. Cleo suddenly interjected, moving closer to Callie, only within a few feet of her face. She wanted an immediate reply from Callie. "I know this is a page from your diary *or something*…but...I'd like an answer to a simple question: do you have a crush on me…I mean, do you like me…or not? Because the way you have acted toward me as been, for the most part, *nothing other than hostile*. I don't get it."

Callie cleared her throat. She tried to come up with a snappy comeback, and nothing came to her. She decided to go the simpler route. She gently spoke into Cleo's left ear, saying a few words which indicated that what she wrote stood on its own, without much additional commentary. "My true thoughts about you are *plainly stated* on that page and I stand by them…a page which you *dastardly* got your hands on…some way or another."

The response took Cleo aback. She expected Callie to deny she had written the diary entry, allowing her to walk away and leave Callie's room without a second thought. As such, the

social awkwardness would soon fade away. Callie saying that she had written her "true thoughts" down on the page meant one thing: she had soft spot for Cleo in many ways, from hugs to dreaming of kisses and Cleo's hair brushing against her face. This blew her mind.

She began hyperventilating, like Brian, and had an anxiety attack, fainting, and then fell to the floor with a thump. As her eyes began to close, Callie shrieked, "Cleo, are you okay?" She felt completely trapped. Telling anyone that Cleo had come into her room would arouse suspicion. She expected that people would *automatically* think that she and Cleo were a "thing," undermining her standing in the school. She paced around the room, continually staring at Cleo's unconscious body. Although in a bit of shock, *she remembered her CPR training* and concluded it would the only option. The method would be risky because she would have to give Cleo a smacker. If anyone walked in and saw their interaction, they both would be humiliated. After a set of chest compressions, she leaned down, going in for *a mouth-to-mouth resuscitation*.

By the time Cleo woke up, Callie had pulled away, sitting in a plush leather chair, twiddling her thumbs *like nothing* had happened. Rubbing her head, Cleo looked around in a daze. Not remembering where she was, she began scanning the room for clues. However, when her olive-green eyes met with Callie's mostly de-saturated dark pink eyes, she scattered back across the room like a crab. Coming to the realization she was in Callie's room, she *shivered* with terror. She wondered *why* she had ever gone into the room in the first place, after all the mean stuff Callie had spoken to her face during her time at the academy. She then remembered the diary entry she found, and it all came back to her. She took a deep breath and stood up, almost reaching the door, when Callie's pale-skinned hand grabbed hers, *pleading* for her to "stay."

Spinning around, she groused, responding with one word: "fine." After an awkward silence where neither one of them said anything, Cleo spoke. “What is it…you want?...I don't want to be here *all day*." Callie beamed as her face lit up with joy. She *meekly* stuttered. "Can I-I-I touch…your hair?" Amazed she only had this one request, after remembering the diary entry she had read, Cleo responded the same way as before, by mouthing one single word: "fine." She stepped closer to Callie, who touched the hair, with her eyes growing even wider.

For Cleo, coming into her room and having this interaction had to be the *weirdest thing* she had ever experienced while in the "future," outpacing any of the wild adventures she had embarked upon with her newfound friends. While Callie's eyes sparkled, she put up her hand, indicating she wanted Callie to stop. Docilely receding back to her chair, Cleo dashed toward the door. Before leaving the room, she made one final assertion. *She hoped* it would make her thoughts crystal clear so that Callie could fully comprehend the reason *why* she had barged into her dorm room in the first place. She believed she could clear up any possible misunderstandings or misperceptions with the power of her words, once and for all, leaving no doubt in Callie's mind:

"I came here as a *common courtesy*. I didn't have to come. If you really believe what you wrote on that page, you *need* to be nicer to me. Otherwise, I will keep on being sassy right on back. *No more* of those mean nicknames, please. As it stands now, I don't like you. I let you touch my hair but our lips *will never meet*…and my hair is not purplish black with gold

streaks…it is very dark greyish violet with gold streaks…come on, how can you get that wrong?...one final thing: we will never speak of this again…it *never happened*."

Before the sliding door closed, she winked and softly whispered, "see you around, Callipolli," then hopped on her hoverboard. She whizzed down the hallway en route to the room she shared with her best friend, Akila. The whole experience stunned Callie, whose mouth remained open, aghast, and caught off guard by Cleo's flirting. After everything sunk in, she snapped back to reality, hollering, "can do, Cleopootra!"

Regrettably, Cleo could not hear her, as she had almost reached her destination. She exhaled, putting a hand on her head, contemplating a possible strategy. On the one hand, her crush come into her room unexpectedly. On the other, she had an *impossible task* ahead of her if she wanted to be better friends with Cleo. *How* could she change her attitude from one that was outright arrogant, snobby, bossy, and the like? These attitudes stemmed from her insecurity, the reason she had wanted to emulate Cleo in the first place. Even though she realized that having any sort of romantic relationship with Cleo *would be a pipe dream*, she dedicated herself to be kinder to Cleo, hoping to slowly improve her rapport. She hoped to take one of the many steps on the long road ahead toward fulfilling her goal, ultimately making her dream a reality.

Chapter 6: Akila, Cleo, Captain Lars, and the Coming Invasion

Chapter Summary

Cleo returns to the room she shares with Akila and explains what happened with Callie. After Akila tells her what Callie kissed her through mouth-to-mouth resuscitation, Cleo gets embarrassed and Akila makes her feel better. What they do not know is that Captain Lars and the Off Colors have arrived in the Niles Galaxy and face the feelt which is preparing to invade the planet of Mayet...

Chapter Notes

I split this off into its own chapter before cross-posting this on Squidge World.

Many rooms away, Cleo arrived at the door of the room she shared with Akila. She almost collapsed as the door opened. The day had tired her out. It had gone by so quickly. It seemed like only minutes ago that she had come back from the P.Y.R.A.M.I.D. Council chambers in Mayet City with Khensu, Brian, and Akila. They could have taken public transit but decided to walk instead. While the hot sun beat down on their necks, they dragged themselves back onto the P.Y.R.A.M.I.D. campus, profusely sweating along the way. Khensu avoided this by gallivanting off to his office. With Brian a cyborg and Cleo having specific melanin in his skin, neither ended up being sunburned. Akila suffered from it, however, with her ears, gills, and face getting quite burned.

Since her home planet of Vevison had cooler temperatures, it did not have two seasons like Mayet: sumber and vinter. The planet had only one season throughout the year: Vinring. Some days had cool temperatures, while others were freezing cold. If anyone on the planet knew of Earth's seasons, they would have called it a combination between winter and spring, with a "v" added at the beginning of the season due to the name of the planet. On Mayet, sumber lasted most of the year, while vinter was a short one-week-long season where temperatures could drop 150 below zero. That made it like the ice planet where Doctor Queed lived for years upon years after leaving P.Y.R.A.M.I.D. for reasons which are not fully known. The planet of Chios, where Akila's moms, Theoda and Pothina, lived, like her (after Vivison was invaded by Octavian), had a similar environment to Mayet, but that did not prepare her for the planet's weather patterns.

When they had returned to their room, Cleo applied some soothing lotion to Akila's ears, gills, and face, so that the sunburn would not be as painful. The treatment worked perfectly, calming her down, and she fell fast asleep from heat exhaustion. While Akila took an

afternoon nap, Cleo stepped out to play some computer games with Brian in his messy laboratory down the hall. He kept it a well-kept secret that he lived in that space, which included a spare room with a bed, window, and other accoutrements, not even telling Cleo or Akila about it. Later, Cleo had returned to the room, encountering an upright Akila, and when she wanted to take a nap, she stumbled upon Callie's note, leading to the chain of events that had just transpired.

Back in the present, Cleo began to fall to the ground. Akila quickly ran to her aid. She propped Cleo up, carrying her, over her shoulder, to her bed, recommending she lie down and take time to relax. Speaking sympathetically, she asked her why she felt so fatigued. She regretted this line of inquiry, as Cleo began a long explanation of what she had gone through during the day, ending it by explaining where she had come from only a few minutes before. "I would say that sun exposure today is the reason I'm tired…even though that isn't the reason…it's what happened with Callie, her admitting she likes me a lot in that diary entry… and I woke up in her room after I fainted or something. It's all too much."

After Cleo had finished talking, Akila leaned in closer. She wanted to tell her something privately. She knew it would likely shock Cleo. She saw no other alternative to telling her the truth behind Callie's actions based on what she knew about CPR, *assuming* she practiced it after Cleo passed out. Exhaling noisily, she moved herself nearer, speaking into Cleo's right ear, and verbalizing the following words: "Before you rest, I'd like to leave you with one thought: if you woke up after fainting, that means Callie did chest compressions and *mouth-to-mouth resuscitation* to save you."

Cleo understood only part of what Akila meant. Even though she had heard of chest compressions from Doctor Queed, the phrase "mouth-to-mouth resuscitation" did not ring a bell. Although she had become *more accustomed* to living in Mayet and the fast pace of technology in this hyper-technological world, she did not know everything. After all, when Khensu told her about a "quarantine," she had no idea what he was talking about. Her haughty attitude resulted in the inflection of all those at P.Y.R.A.M.I.D. with a virus which transformed the students into zombies of sorts. It was only reversed after Doctor Queed produced an antidote on his lab on a dangerous ice land, and they fired the antidote at each infected student through modified helmets. She indicated her ignorance of "mouth-to-mouth resuscitation" to Akila, who laughed loudly, uttering fateful words which caused Cleo great concern. "Come on, Cleo, *she kissed you* on the mouth, that's what mouth-to-mouth resuscitation means. She *probably felt ashamed*…that's why she didn't say anything…did you consider that?"

Hearing that, her cheeks *became as red as strawberries*. She fidgeted and wiped her lip. She examined one of her fingertips and *saw pink lipstick*, the same kind Callie loved to apply day in and day out, part of her "mean girl" style. Her eyes darted around the room in sheer horror. She wanted to go back and scold Callie. After realizing that Callie had brought her back after fainting, she decided to let it go. Before turning in for the night and to lift her spirits, she wanted to do one last thing: *stare at the stars*. Akila agreed to join her on the room's balcony, overlooking one of the many courtyards within the P.Y.R.A.M.I.D. school complex. Cleo's eyes filled with wonder, marveling at the splendor of the stars.

She saw a bright flash of blue light, cheering at what seemed to be a scientific marvel, guessing it was another supernova exploding. She remarked about the beauty of the night sky, adding, "We should go stargazing every night!" Akila happily agreed, with her blushes, in response to Cleo's comment, *unseen in the dark*. On another side of the building, Callie glared at the stars, longing for the future. She hoped for good fortune and a better camaraderie with Cleo in the future. Even a small step toward this objective would raise her self-confidence.

Neither Akila nor Cleo, Callie nor anyone on Mayet, and definitely no one in the Nile Galaxy, knew that the bright blue flash they had seen came from some artificial, not a natural phenomenon: an inter-dimensional portal closing. A small yellowish ship named the *Off Colors Astral Cruiser*, otherwise known as *OCAC*, had arrived in the galaxy by accident. They had been trying to go to Homeworld to find the truth behind the message sent by the Diamonds to Steven. By some strange coincidence they had arrived in the Nile Galaxy, like the GDA.

Traveling through time and space to the Nile Galaxy had been the most severe time and space shift they had ever experienced, even more their chance meeting with the *Pascal Magi*, the people of Gargantia, or the princesses on Etheria. Rhodonite trembled anxiously. The fact this journey shook her, head of strategic operations for the *OCAC*, did not bode well for the crew. *She hoped* the Captain would be able to ease her anxiety. "Captain, where are we? Last, I remember, we were meeting with the women on the *Pascal Magi* and the people of Haru-Nico on Namba Island. Now, we are…"

Captain Lars tended to inspire those in his employ in times of turmoil and strife. This was one of those times. He took Rhodonite by the shoulder, telling her that everything would be fine. The other members of his team, Pappy, the Rutile Twins, and Fluorite, were similarly concerned. He calmed them down, standing with his hand outstretched, and his feet firmly planted on the ground *in a power pose*, making one bold pronouncement to his fellow crew members. "I can't tell you where we are because...I don't know. We are the Off Colors. Each of us is strong in our own way. We have met princesses, salvagers, sailors, and many others on our travels. Each planet provides a place for us to explore and learn more about the universe. That is exactly what the Crystal Gems, and Steven, wanted us to do. *Onward to adventure*!"

The Off Colors cheered and clapped loudly, until something terrified them: a fleet of Diamond ships. They had never seen so many and almost poofed out of fright. An eerie voice shouted out of their communicator, giving them all the chills. It was Emerald. Blinded by her pride, she could not be more pleased to see one of "her" Sun Incinerators "returning" to the fleet. “Welcome home Sun Incinerator #524. We missed you. We of the Great Diamond Armada gladly accept your return to our ranks. *We hope* you realized the error of your ways, of joining *those rowdy rebels* who wanted to make a change in the galaxy. They couldn't be more wrong. We need brave soldiers like you to smash Octavian into the ground! And you will be under my command."

With Emerald's creepy laugh, the communication ended. Without warning, a tractor beam pulled their ship closer and closer to a huge *Trilliant Splitter*, of the many ships within the Great Diamond Armada, directed by Hessonite, in orbit around the planet of Octavianus. Lars

lamented about their situation. He gulped, *feeling just as scared* as the rest of his crew. "Comrades, I have a feeling we aren't in the Milky Way Galaxy anymore..."

The journey ahead for them would be arduous, putting them face-to-face with their former adversary, Emerald, and would be their toughest challenge yet. It appeared that all routes led to doom. Lars hugged all his fellow team members, uncertain of what to do next, as their ship neared the *Trilliant Splitter*. Getting out of this situation would either require some ingenious thinking or a miracle. Neither seemed to be on their side.

He and his crew were afraid, dreading their fate at the hands of the Diamonds. The events to come, *in the hours and days ahead*, would astound them and their would-be captors. A huge mêlée would commence, determining their future and that of the galaxy. In the ruin of old friendships, new ones would spring up, with love sprouting from the most unlikely places. Secrets would be revealed, smashing apart the reality they had all accepted. The Nile Galaxy would be changed forever, and no one could do *anything* to stop it...

End Notes

This story uses "Cleopatra Philopator VII (TV)," "Mihos (TV)," "Akila Theoris (TV)," "Octavian (TV)," "Khensu Kasaar (TV)," "Mayet," "P.Y.R.A.M.I.D.," "Administrant Khepra," "Misti," "Kek," "Professor Sitre," "Msumaki," and "Mayet City" pages on the Cleopatra in Space fandom site, the "Samurai Jack (character)" page on the Samurai Jack fandom site, and the "Sun Incinerator" page on the Steven Universe fandom site. Also, nardi jawiyin is Arabic for "Nerdy Joy." And yes, hangry is a real word, as Merriam-Webster had a whole article and a dictionary entry about it . The phrase in Callie's diary entry, "these feelings in my heart" comes from end-of-episode preview of the next episode in the 2006 anime, "Kashimashi: Girl Meets Girl", otherwise known as Kashimashi ~Gāru Mītsu Gāru~. I enjoyed that anime so much I had to include it, and will likely use it as a partial inspiration going forward. The invasion of the planet of Octavianus was also undoubtedly inspired by invasions of planets in the "Star Wars: The Clone Wars" and "Star Wars: Clone Wars" animated series. The school's food court in this story is based on my experiences eating at a school food court when going to grad school. The line, "Well, comrades, we aren't in the Milky Way Galaxy anymore..." is supposed to be harken back to the 1939 film The Wizard of Oz, when which Dorothy says, "Toto, I've a feeling we're not in Kansas anymore." I also, was obviously, influenced by "She-Ra and the Princesses of Power," so some of the phrasing reflects that as well. This has to be the longest story I've ever written, coming in at over 10,000 words!

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!